

July 20, 2018

Chairman Walden
Chairman Harper

Dear Chairmen Walden and Harper:

On behalf of the 104 hospitals represented by the Alabama Hospital Association (AlaHA), the following is provided as a response to the request for information on resources and the availability of SANE programs contained in your letter of June 21, 2018.

Alabama is a state with large medically underserved areas with limited financial resources. Because of these limitations, it is important to maximize collaboration and cooperation among involved entities. The Alabama Crime Victim's Compensation Commission, created by the legislature in 1984, provides some payment to hospitals and other community providers for sexual assault examinations. The Alabama Department of Forensic Science makes evidence collection kits available to hospitals at no cost.

As a membership organization, AlaHA does not determine the services provided by our member hospitals, nor suggest standards of care for any medical procedure, test, or exam. As a consequence, the Alabama Hospital Association does not maintain a statewide data base on programs such as SANE.

In response to your inquiry, AlaHA reached out to many of our member hospitals. During those conversations, we learned that SANE programs, SAK Kits, and other resources for victims of sexual assault are available throughout our state. In some cases, services may be provided directly through hospitals, in other instances through outside contracts with other entities or by referral to other providers.

Importantly, significant challenges were identified in the provision of sexual assault services. While not a comprehensive list, the following represent many of the concerns:

- A shortage of staff available to provide 24/7 coverage by SANE trained medical personnel.
- Severe financial challenges, especially in rural areas which limit the ability to hire staff.
- Difficulties in maintaining the chain of custody of evidence collected.

- Insufficient training opportunities.
- Lack of access to contractors or resources willing to provide services in rural areas.
- A significant shortage of medical professionals trained to perform pediatric sexual assault exams.
- A profound shortage of health care providers (physicians and nurses) in Alabama's HPSAs.

The combination of financial instability of many rural hospitals, a severe shortage of health care personnel, and the lack of training make the direct provision of SANE services problematic for many hospitals. It is important to note that increasing access to training without improved financial resources for hospitals is unlikely to significantly lessen the challenge.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

Sincerely,

Donald E. Williamson, MD
President/CEO
Alabama Hospital Association